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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1152

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6848

INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0713

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4250

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7804

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5364

RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1228

RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001119

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: BURMA: FOUR STEPS BACKWARD, TWO STEPS FORWARD

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Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In his first public address since the September protests and regime crackdown, Senior General Than Shwe asserted the government would move forward with its "roadmap to democracy," and gave no indication he would alter the process to make it more inclusive. Than Shwe has sent his hard-line Minister of Culture to demand ethnic cease-fire groups make public statements declaring Aung San Suu Kyi does not represent them. Aung San Suu Kyi was taken to the Government Guest House again today for what we believe to be another meeting with Minister of Relations Aung Kyi. Aung San Suu Kyi would like a message passed to Gambari informing him of her two objectives: establishing a tripartite dialogue with the regime, ethnic minority representatives, and herself; and amending the roadmap to include her participation (action request in paragraph 5). Another monastery was reportedly raided in Rangoon and one monk detained. End Summary.

Business as Usual for Than Shwe

¶2. (U) In an address to the regime's mass member organization, the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), Senior General Than Shwe stated his intention to move full speed ahead with the "roadmap to discipline-flourishing democracy." It was Than Shwe's first address since the September demonstrations and resulting crackdown. He gave no indication he would alter the roadmap to include Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) Party. Than Shwe reiterated that the National Convention had been successfully completed and noted that the drafting of the constitution would move forward. He mentioned nothing regarding modifying either of these processes to meet the concerns of political dissidents or the international community. Indeed, the regime's mouthpiece daily, the New Light of Myanmar, announced the Constitution Drafting Committee would convene December 3, with no mention of a revision of its participants.

Sabotaging the Dialogue

¶13. (SBU) In another indication Than Shwe intends to sabotage the dialogue process, hard-line Minister of Culture Khin Aung Myint has been meeting with ethnic cease-fire groups, ordering them to issue statements disavowing Aung San Suu Kyi as their representative. The statements are virtually identical and have been published daily in the New Light of Myanmar. The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the New Mon State Party (NMSP) both refused to issue such statements. Consequently, KIO offices and houses of senior KIO members were raided in Myitkyina on November 17, and several members' cell phones confiscated. The raid was reportedly ordered by Northern Commander Major General Ohn Myint and was the first raid conducted against the KIO in the 13 years since the organization signed a cease-fire agreement with the Burma Army.

¶14. (U) The NMSP issued a statement on November 16 endorsing Aung San Suu Kyi's call for political dialogue and underscoring the fact that the proposals they submitted to the National Convention were "ignored" and "rejected." The statement also said that a political dialogue could only be meaningful if all ethnic nationalities were included.

Aung San Suu Kyi Meets Liaison Again

¶15. (C) We observed Aung San Suu Kyi moving from her home to the Government Guest House today, reportedly for another meeting with Minister of Relations Aung Kyi. During a meeting with poloff, Aung San Suu Kyi's doctor, Dr. Tin Myo Win, passed along a message from Aung San Suu Kyi for

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Gambari. She has two main objectives: the establishment of a tripartite dialogue that includes the regime, herself, and ethnic representatives; and amending the regime's roadmap to include her participation. Tin Myo Win said that Aung San Suu Kyi had established a code word with Gambari: "Imani" so that he would know that messages passed to him from third parties were really from her. Tin Myo Win plans to visit Aung San Suu Kyi again on November 22. Action requested: please pass this message to Special Envoy Gambari.

Regime Continues to Persecute Monks

¶16. (SBU) On November 15 approximately 150 USDA members, local officials, and police, raided a monastery in New Dagon Township, in Rangoon, stealing the monastery's funds and detaining a monk, U Sanda Wara. Media reports state that the regime is attempting to evict monks from 39 monasteries in the area, purportedly over a land dispute. We have been unable to contact the family of U Gambira, a detained monk who helped organize the September demonstrations, to verify reports that he has been charged and sentenced for treason. Treason has been a common charge against political activists, including those arrested May 1 in front of the American Center. The government controlled newspapers here also indicated that those individuals still detained will likely be tried for treason and terrorism.

Comment

¶17. (C) Than Shwe's speech and the regime's blatant attempt to divide the ethnic cease-fire groups from Aung San Suu Kyi offer another indication that Than Shwe has no intention of entering any dialogue that would result in significant compromise or loosen the military's stranglehold on power.

He will use the appearance of setting up a dialogue to keep international pressure at bay for as long as he can. In the meantime, attacks on Burma's Buddhist clergy continue while the most effective pro-democracy activists remain in prison facing criminal charges. Our public statements should highlight the obvious contradictions from the professed willingness to enter a genuine dialogue. We should also inform Burma's ASEAN partners of this to ensure Burma hears at ASEAN meetings this week that they are serious about not returning to business as usual, even though Than Shwe is not.

End comment.

VILLAROSA